THE CORRECT REPLY TO THE ONE WHO CHANGED THE RELIGION OF THE MESSIAH

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PART 1. THE UNIVERSAL NATURE OF MUHAMMAD'S PROPHETHOOD

A. THE PURPOSE OF WRITING AL-JAWAB AS-SAHIH

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SYNOPSIS

The Christians had attempted to establish the truthfulness of their religion, at the hands of Paul of Antioch, the Bishop of Sidon, in a treatise entitled *The Eloquent and Renowned Treatise Proving the True Belief and the Upright Opinion.* This treatise reached a large number of the senior figureheads of Christendom of the time, all of whom praised it and held its contents to valid and truth.

The treatise attempts to establish six points, which include the claim that Muhammad was not sent to them but only the Pagan Arabs. Also, they claimed that Muhammad praised their religion. Similarly, that previous religions bear testimony to the tenets and beliefs that they hold, that Christ perfected religion and hence they are not in need of any new message, and that they are actually Monotheists.

The treatise was actually written after meetings with the intelligentsia and religious leaders of Christendom and summarises what various Christians in all the corners of the globe, in their varying colours and languages have agreed upon concerning the status of Muhammad.

In truth, the arguments they have adduced are in fact against them, not for them. As the story unfolds, it becomes evident that the Christian religion is innovated and paganistic in essence. Some of what the Innovators and Apostates from Islaam fell into has parallels to that which the Christians fell into, and hence understanding the true nature of Christianity helps in understanding the true nature of the misguidance of the Innovators and the disbelief of the Apostates.

A. THE PURPOSE OF WRITING AL-JAWAB AS-SAHIH

Introduction and praising Allaah

There is none worthy of worship but Allaah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allaah. Praise to Allaah, the Lord of the universe, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Master of the Day of Judgement. Praise to Allaah who created the heavens and the earth and made the darkness light. Those who disbelieve in their Lord wander astray.

Warning those who claim Allaah has taken a son

Praise to Allaah who did not take a son, who has no partner in governance, nor has any associate from lower creation whom he has exalted in greatness. Praise to Allaah who sent down upon His servant the Book, and did not permit any deviation in it, but established it in order to warn of a severe chastisement from Him, to make the believers who do good works rejoice so that for them there would be a fine reward. And to warn those who say that Allaah has taken a son. They have no knowledge of that, nor did their forefathers; dreadful is the word that goes forth from their tongues. In any case, what they speak is but a lie:

"All the praises and thanks be to Allah, Who has sent down to His slave (Muhammad) the Book (the Qur'an), and has not placed therein any crookedness. (He has made it) Straight to give warning (to the disbelievers) of a severe punishment from Him, and to give glad tidings to the believers (in the Oneness of Allah Islamic Monotheism), who work righteous deeds, that they shall have a fair reward (i.e. Paradise). They shall abide therein forever. And to warn those (Jews, Christians, and pagans) who say, "Allah has begotten a son (or offspring or children)." No knowledge have they of such a thing, nor had their fathers. Mighty is the word that comes out of their mouths [i.e. He begot (took) sons and daughters]. They utter nothing but a lie."(18:1-5)

Establishing the truth of Monotheism by the Messengership of Muhammad

As for what follows (*ammaa ba'd*); Allaah, may He be blessed and exalted! Made Muhammad the Seal of the Prophets, and perfected His religion for him and for his community. He sent him during an interval between the messengers, at a time when unbelief was manifest and the [correct] paths blotted out. Through him He gave life to the characteristics of faith which had been studied. By him he restrained the people of idolatry, unbelief and doubt from their service of idols, fires and crosses. By him He conquered the unbelievers of the People of the Book - the people of idolatry and doubt - and he erected the lighthouse of His religion which pleased Him.

Through him He celebrated the memory of His servants whom He chose. He elected him, and by him He manifested what the People of the Book had kept hidden. Through him He showed where they had gone astray from the correct path. By him He confirmed the trustworthiness of the Torah, the Psalms and the Gospel. In him He

disclosed what was not true in them by way of the falsity of corruption and replacement.

The iniquities and deviation of the People of the Book

For that which Allaah censured the Jews and Christians in His Book - like their rejecting the truth which is opposed to their whim; their being too proud to receive it; their envying and harming its people; their adopting the way of error, miserliness, cowardice and harshness of heart; their describing Almighty Allaah in terms similar to the faults and failings of creatures; their denial of that [Book] in which He described Himself in which no creature resembles Him; their going to excess concerning the prophets and holy men, making such persons share in the worship due the Lord of the universe; their notion of divine indwelling (*hulul*) and divine union (*ittihad*) which makes a created servant become the Lord of the universe; their departing in works of religion from the legal traditions (*shari'ah*) of the prophets and messengers; their acting in religion simply from whim (hawa), intuition (*dhawq*), or ecstasy (*wajd*) in their hearts rather than following the knowledge which Allaah handed down in His clear book; their taking their great scholars and worshipers as lords whom they follow in the religion which they have introduced in opposition to that of the prophets (9:31); their opposing what is known by sound reason and correct tradition with what they think comes from divine revelations (*al-tanazzulat al-ilahiyya*) and holy inspirations (*al-futuhat al-qudsiyya*), although they actually stem from the whispering of the Accursed One so that someone who accepts them is among those about whom Allaah spoke (67:10; 7:129); and other kinds of innovations and errors for which Allaah censured the people of the Two Books - all that is what Allaah warned his chosen community about. He made all that befall them a lesson for those who can understand.

The Islamic Ummah will follow the ways of those before them

The prophet disclosed that the occurrence of these things must befall some of this {Islamic} community, although he had disclosed that in his community there would remain a group established in truth whose enemies and deserters could never harm even until the arrival of the Hour. He taught that his community would not agree upon an error, nor would those of other religious bodies outside it defeat this community; rather it would remain manifest and triumphant, following its rightly guided, triumphant prophet. However, in its midst there must be those who follow the traditions (*sunan*) of the Jews, Christians, Byzantines and Magians. It is reported in the collections of sound hadith reports from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet said:

"You will follow the traditions of those who came before you exactly so that were they to enter a bear's den, then you would enter it." They said, "O messenger of Allaah, the Jews and the Christians?" He said, "Who else."

It is also in the collections of reports from Abu Sa'id that the Prophet

said:

"My community will take up the way of acting of the peoples before them, inch by inch, foot by foot." They said, "O Prophet of Allaah, Persians and Romans?" He said, "From what other people than them?"

The Hypocrites and the Innovators ◆ Some of the Hypocrites and Innovators of Islaam share with the Christians

Among those who outwardly profess Islam there are hypocrites and those hypocrites are in the process of attaining the lowest portion of the Fire, below Jews and Christians. Thus, that for which Allaah censured Jews and Christians may be found among the hypocrites associated with Islam. They are those who outwardly profess faith in all that the Messenger brought, but secretly are opposed to that - like the renegades (*malahida*) and the Batinis. How much more will this be in the case with those among them who openly manifest godlessness (*al-ilhad*).

Some of that is found among the innovators who, although they profess the generality of the message of the Prophet both inwardly and outwardly, are in confusion about the same things which are confused among the hypocrites. Thus they follow what is doubtful and depart from the solid path, like the Khajarites and other sectarians like them.

Divine Indwelling (Hulool) and Ittihaad (Divine Union)

The Christians, on [the matter of] the attributes of Allaah and His union with creatures, fall into error in which many of these [innovators] share. Among the renegades [from Islam] there are those who are in greater error than the Christians. Divine indwelling (*al-hulul*) and union (*al-ittihad*) is of two kinds, universal and particular. Universal *hulul* and *ittihad* is like those who say, "Allaah in His essence has taken residence in every place," or "His existence is the very existence of creatures."

The particularised form is like [the belief of] those who claim divine indwelling and union for a member of the family of the Prophet - like 'Ali and others - such as the Nusayriyya and people like that. Or it is like those who attach themselves to the descendants of the Prophet such as al-Hakim - as do Druzes and people like them, or like someone who believes these things about one of the Sufi masters - the followers of Al-Hallaj and people like them.

Whoever says that Allaah has taken residence in or united with some one of the Companions or relatives [of the Prophet] or one of the shaykhs is in this respect more unbelieving than Christians, who hold for divine union and indwelling in Christ, for Christ is superior to all these others. Whoever holds for a universal and union has fallen into error more universal than that of Christians. This is the case also for someone who holds for the eternity of the souls of human beings, or their deeds, their speech, their sounds, the materials of writings or anything like that. In his holding this, someone has a portion of the view of Christians.

Through an understanding of the real nature of the religion of the Christians and its falsity one can also know the falsity of those views which resemble theirs - that is, the views of the perpetrators of apostasy and innovation. When the light of faith and the Qur'an arrives, Allaah destroys that which opposes Him. He said, "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished away. Falsehood is ever bound to vanish" (17:81). Allaah has made clear the good and superior qualities of truth, for which reason He established it as true.

The reality of Christianity explains the reality of the views of the Innovators of Islaam and Apostates

One of the reasons we treat this religion and its appearance is that a letter arrived from Cyprus in which there is an argument for the religion of the Christians. In it the scholars (*'ulama'*) of their religion as well as the eminent persons (*fudala'*) of their church. Ancient and modern, plead their case with religious and intellectual arguments; thus it demands that we mentioned by way of answer the final conclusions to which [their arguments] lead and that we make clear their straying from what is correct, in order that thinking people may benefit thereby, and that the Balance (*al-Mizan*) and the Book with which Allaah sent His messengers may prevail.

The Letter from Cyprus

I will include the exact wording of what they have stated, chapter by chapter, and following each chapter I will mention in response the primary and secondary arguments that pertain to it, both joining argument and settling it. That which they state in this book is the basic support upon which their scholars depend, both in our time and in the previous ages, although some of them may elaborate further than others depending upon the situation. We have found them making use of this treatise before now, their scholars' hand it down among themselves, and old copies of it still exist.

Methodology of the reply

It is attributed to Paul of Antioch, the monk, bishop of Sidon. He wrote it to one of his friends, and had previously written works about the supremacy of Christianity. He stated that when he travelled to the land of Byzantium and Constantinople, to the country of Amalfi, and to some of the districts of northern Europe and Rome, he met with the leaders of the people of that religion and conferred with their finest scholars. They thought highly of this letter which he called *The Eloquent and Renowned Treatise Proving the True Belief and the Upright Opinion.*

The contents of this letter are in six chapters.

The contents of the Letter ◆ Six claims

1) Their claim that Muhammad was not sent to them, but rather to the Arabs of the Jahiliyya, and that this is indicated by what is in the Qur'an and also proven by reason.

2) Their claim that Muhammad in the Qur'an extolled the religion they followed, and his praise for it is something which obligates them to

adhere to it.

3) Their claim that the message of the preceding prophets, like the Torah, the Psalms, the Gospel and other messages than these, bear witness to their religion in that what they hold concerning the divine hypostases, the trinity, divine unions and other matters is true and correct. They must firmly adhere to it. Since divine religion (*shar'*) extols rather than opposes it [their belief] and reason does not object to it, it is not permissible for them to renounce it.

4) [Their claim] that their professing that [religion] is reasonable, that what they hold concerning the trinity is demonstrable by rational argumentation and that revealed religion is in agreement with its *principles (al-usul*).

5) Their claim that they are monotheist, excusing what they say in such expressions as those of the divine hypostases which manifest a multiplicity of gods by holding that those are of the same type as the texts among Muslims in which anthropomorphism (*al-tashbih*) and corporality (*al-tajsim*) are evident.

6) [Their claim] that Christ came after Moses bringing the final limit of perfection; there is no need, after the end point has been reached, for an additional divine law beyond the [ultimate] goal. Rather, what comes after that is unacceptable as a religion.

All arguments are against the claimants not for them

We will show - to Allaah be praised and strength - that all which they adduce as religious argument, whether from the Qur'an or from the books preceding the Qur'an, as well as reason itself is an argument, not for them, but against them. The generality of what they produce as arguments from the prophetic texts and from what is reasonable is in itself a proof against them and manifests the corrupt nature of their teaching, as do other prophetic texts and the criteria formed by rational standards of proof.

The same applies to the arguments of the Innovators of Islaam

This is the case with most of what the innovators (*ahl al-bida*) call upon as proof in the books of Allaah. In those texts there is that which clearly shows that no argument for them can be found in the books; rather, the texts themselves are a proof against them. Such matters have been stated in the refutation of the innovators, the sectarians and others affiliated with Islam *(ahl al-qibla*). Generally they only deal in obscure expressions to which they cling obstinately and in which they suppose there is proof. To these things they add whatever is connected with their whims while they avoid clear cut, direct and unambiguous expressions.

The nature of falsehood

This is the state of all people of falsehood, as Allaah said: "They follow but a guess and that which they themselves desire. And now the

guidance from their Lord has come to them" (52:23). They are in ignorance and wrongdoing (33:72-73), but believers are those whom Allaah has absolved from ignorance and wrongdoing. They are the followers of the prophets, for the prophets were sent with knowledge and justice (48:28). Allaah has disclosed that he [the Prophet] was not erring and ignorant, nor straying and following whims. He did not speak from whim, but only spoke the revelation handed down to him by Allaah (53:1-4).

The nature of Guidance: Knowledge and Justice

Guidance contains beneficial language, and the religion of truth includes right action and is based on justice (57:25). The basis of uprightness (*al-'adl*) in the truth about Allaah is the worship of Allaah alone, allowing no one else to share in that worship. As Luqman told his son, "*Shirk* is great wrongdoing" (31:13).

In the collections of sound hadith it is reported from 'Abd Allah Ibn Mas'ud that when the verse "Those who believe and have not obscured their faith by wrongdoing" (6:82) was revealed, it bothered some of the companions of the Messenger, and they asked, "Which of us has not ourselves done wrong?" The Messenger answered, "It is not as you think; it [the wrongdoing] only means *shirk*. Have you not heard the saying of the upright servant, '*Shirk* is great wrongdoing?'"

Whenever the followers of the prophets - who are the people of knowledge and justice - have been in discussion with unbelievers and innovators, the statements of the people of Islam and the sunna have always proceeded from knowledge and justice, not from guesswork and what their own minds imagine. The Prophet has said about this:

"The judges are three - two judges in the Fire and one judge in the Garden. The man with the knowledge of the truth who has judged in opposition to it is in the Fire, as is he who judged people through ignorance."

Abu Dawud and others have related this report.

The way of the Innovators and Sectarians: Ignorance and Injustice

If he, who judged among people in matters of property, homicide and honour without being knowledgeable and impartial is consigned to the Fire, how much more so will he be who passes judgement on sects and religions, on the principles of faith, on divine affairs and universal questions, with neither knowledge, nor fairness? Yet this is the situation of the innovators and sectarians who cling tightly to doubtful obscurities while they claim clear and accurate judgements from the texts of the prophets. They cling to the common factor that is apparently the same in analogies and opinions, but do not pay attention to the differences [among them], which prevent their being connected together and regarded as the same. This is like the situation of the unbelievers and the rest of the innovators and sectarians who make the

creature resemble the Creator, and the Creator the creature. They have coined an evil similitude about Allaah and a contemptible opinion.

Christianity is an innovated religion

The false religion of Christians is nothing but an innovated religion that they invented after the time of Christ and by which they changed the religion of Christ. Not only that, they strayed away from the law (*shari'ah*) of Christ to what they innovated. Then, when Allaah sent Muhammad, they rejected him. Thus their unbelief and error came to be of two aspects - that of changing the religion of the first messenger and of rejecting the second messenger. It is like the unbelief of the Jews who changed the legal prescriptions of the Torah before Allaah's sending Christ, and then they rejected Christ.

The Trinity and Divine Union are not indicated in any of the Heavenly Books

We will show, Allaah willing, that what the Christians hold by way of the trinity and [divine] union has not been indicated by anything in the books of Allaah - neither by the Gospel nor by any other. Rather, they all indicated what is contradictory to that. Neither has reason indicated that; rather, sound reason - as well as the texts of the prophets - have indicated the contrary of that. Similarly, [we will show] that the generality of the laws of their religion were invented and innovated, and were not legislated by Christ.

Between the Jews and the Christians ◆ The Messiah between the Jews and the Christians

Their rejection of Muhammad is their form of unbelief that is evident to every Muslim, like the Jews' rejection of Christ. The Christians' unbelief is more profound than that of the Jews, although they have gone to great lengths to pronounce the Jews unbelievers. They are far more deserving of being declared unbelievers than are the Jews. The Jews claimed that Christ was a lying magician, and even said that he was the child of fornication. The Christians claim that he is Allaah who created the first and the last, and that he is judge of the Day of Judgement. The two peoples have thus gone to the limits of contradiction and mutual opposition and antithesis. Each group condemns the others on matters for which [the condemnation] is usually deserved (2:113).

Muhammad Ibn Ishaq stated from Muhammad Ibn Abi Muhammad, the mawla of Zayd Ibn Thabit, from 'Ikrima or Sa'id Ibn Jubayr, from Ibn Abbas that when the delegation of Christians from Najran came to the Messenger some Jewish rabbis approached them and they all argued in the presence of the Messenger. Rabi' Ibn Harmala said "You don't have anything [of truth]," and he disbelieved in both Jesus and the Gospel. One of the Christians from Najran said to the Jews, "You don't have anything [of truth]," and he rejected the prophethood of Moses and disbelieved in the Torah. Then Allaah sent down the verse in which He says about the two peoples, "The Jews say that the Christians follow nothing, yet both are readers of the scripture" (2:113). He [Muhammad] said, "Each reads in his book the confirmation of that whereby he disbelieves." That is, the Jews reject Jesus, although they

have the Torah in which there is confirmation of Jesus that Allaah placed on the tongue of Moses. In the Gospel there is the answer of Jesus confirming Moses and that which he brought in the Torah. Each group rejects what its opponent's holds.

Qatada said that when the Jews said, "The Christians follow nothing," he [Muhammad] said, "Yes, the earliest Christians followed something but then they innovated and split into sects." When the Christians said that the Jews follow nothing, he said "Yes the early Jews followed something but they innovated and split into sects." Thus the Jews reject the religion of the Christians and say "They follow nothing," while the Christians reject all of that by which the Jews are distinguished from them, even the things legislated in the Torah which Christ did not abrogate but commanded them to perform. The Jews reject most of that by which the Christians are distinguished from them, so that they even rejected the truth that Jesus brought.

The Unbelief of the Jews and Christians

Although the Christians went to excess in pronouncing *takfir* upon the Jews and transgressed beyond the proper limits by the excess and error which they innovated, nevertheless, there is no doubt that the Jews became unbelievers when they rejected Christ (3:55; 61:14). The unbelief of Christians in rejecting Muhammad and in opposing Muslims is greater than the unbelief of the Jews in simply rejecting Christ. Christ only abrogated a little of the legislation of the Torah, and the rest of his law referred back to it. The greater part of the religion of Christians, however, they invented after [the time of] Christ. Thus in the Jews' simple rejection of Christ there was no opposition to the law, as there *was* when the Christians rejected Muhammad who brought an independent Book from Allaah, none of whose legislation was a mere reiteration of another law (29:51).

The Torah and the Qur'an and their Link

The Qur'an, although it is greater than the Torah, is of similar origin, and for this reason learned men among the Christians used to consider Moses and Muhammad together. The king of the Christians, the Negus, said upon hearing the Qur'an, "The spirit which visited Moses has come upon you." Similarly, Waraqa Ibn Nawfal, who was one of the educated Christian Arabs, said upon hearing the teaching of the Prophet, "This and that which Moses brought were taken from the niche."

Similarly, Allaah Himself has linked the Torah and the Qur'an:

"But when there came to them the Truth from our presence, they said: 'Why is he not given the like of what was given to Moses?' Did they not disbelieve in that which was given to Moses of old? They say: 'Two magics that support each other.'" (28:48)

"Two magics," that is, the Torah and the Qur'an, and in another

reading, “They say, ‘Two magicians,’“ that is Moses and Muhammad.

“And they say. ‘In both we are disbelievers.’ Say: Then bring a Scripture from the presence of Allaah that gives clearer guidance than these two [that] I may follow it, if you are truthful.” (28:48-49)

But there has never been a book sent down from Allaah more rightly guided than the Qur’an (28:50). And these [disbelievers in the two books] are the Christians.

The Compilation of the Letter (of Apologeticism)

In his treatise the author of the Christians’ Letter stated that he [his Muslim friend] asked him to make a careful investigation of what various Christians - the followers of Christ - people of various languages, dispersed to the four corners of the world, from east to west and from north to south, residing on the islands of the Sea [the Mediterranean], dwelling on the continent which stretches to the setting of the sun - believe concerning him [Muhammad]. The bishop, a religious leader of the Roman [Byzantium] empire, met with members of their intelligentsia and their rulers. He conferred with their scholars and their finest people on what he knew about the opinion of people whom he had met on islands of the Sea before his arrival at Cyprus. To them he had preached about their religion, and discussed what they believed about him [Muhammad], and what they themselves had debated about him.